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she is pestering me for a present and I am minded to give her some of this cloth. But first I must show it to her and gain her approval, for the man who buys cloth for a woman without her approval is like one who takes a grape and offers it to a hungry tigress. So the merchant cut a snippet from the roll of cloth and gave it to the Christian.

And as Daoud returned to his shop from the cloth merchant, his shop boy returned from the house of Mahmud. Daoud took from him a sweet lime, and he went into his house which stood at the back of his shop, and he caught his she-cat and pulled out one of her whiskers. Then he took a seed pearl and he wrapped it in the snippet of the cloth, and he put it with the cat's whisker and the sweet lime in a handkerchief and he left the parcel in his house.

After a time Mahmud returned from the shop of disguises, and Daoud was amazed, for Mahmud was dressed as a bearded Persian, nor could he be recognised. And Mahmud sat in Daoud's shop, and he said: Now what do I have to do to test my wife? Daoud answered and said: Now send her a message in the code of love. Mahmud asked: What is this code and how do I send a message in it? Daoud asked: Are you, then, such an ignorant lover? Then Daoud called his shop boy and ordered him: Go and bring me a rose, and a phial of crystal glass containing pure clear water, and a moth, and a flask of wine, and a silk handkerchief.

And after half an hour the shop boy returned with all these articles and he laid them in front of his master. Then Daoud took from his treasury a silver Persian toman and he laid the coin on the table with the other articles. Then Daoud the Christian turned to Mahmud the Moslem and he said: Know you that this is the message written in these

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articles in the universal language of love, as it is spoken in the lands of the Arabs and of the Turks and of the Hindus and of the Franks and of the Chinese, for this language is one understood by lovers and by ladies in every country of the world. Your message reads as follows: You are as delicate and lovely as the petals of a rose. I thirst after you as the gazelle thirsts for pure water. I am drawn to you as the moth is drawn to a candle. You quicken my heart even as wine quickens it and I am a Persian and a stranger.

Then Daoud wrapped up the articles in the silken handkerchief and he said: I will give the packet now to one of my maidservants who is discreet, that she will deliver it to your wife. Then shall we await a reply and then we shall know if she be virtuous or not. And Mahmud said: Do this, that I may know the truth. So Daoud took the packet and he went into his house, but he did not give it to the maidservant, instead he locked it in a cabinet. And he returned and sat in the shop with Mahmud and they discussed business and affairs and passed the time in conversation.

And after two hours Daoud said: I will go and see if the maidservant has returned. And he entered his house and went into his room and he took from it that other packet containing the cat's whisker, the sweet lime, the snippet of cloth and the pearl, and he returned to the shop and gave the packet to Mahmud, saying: This is the reply.

Mahmud opened the packet and he was amazed. He said: What mean these things? This sweet lime is like those on the trees outside my window. This cloth is from my wife's petticoat trousers. But what is this whisker? Daoud looked at the articles and he said: Let me interpret this message, for you are unskilled in this language. This

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whisker is the whisker of a cat, and its meaning is: Come secretly like a cat in the night. The sweet lime from your tree means: Climb up the tree to my window. And as for this piece of cloth, it is wrapped up and there is something inside it. And Daoud opened the snippet of cloth and he said: Its meaning is this: When you remove my petticoat trousers you shall find a pearl.

Mahmud was seized with fury and his face went black with rage. He put his hand on his dagger and shouted: I shall go now to kill this prostitute and cleanse my honour. But Daoud said: Stay, you must see your wife's dishonour with your own eyes. Else you cannot believe in it. You are now dressed as a Persian and you cannot be recognised. Go unto your wife in the night, and climb the tree and enter her window, then if you are able to take off her petticoat trousers and she screams not to rouse the servants, then shall you know that she is dishonourable. And Mahmud said: Have I not seen enough in this message? But Daoud answered: Perhaps she means to trick a lewd fellow to teach him a lesson. You must be sure before you kill your wife.

So Mahmud controlled himself and he sat to await the coming of night. But as for Daoud the Nazarene, he slipped away and told the other bankers the story of those events known to you, my listeners, and they laughed until the breath was gone from their lungs, and they asked Daoud: But what will happen at Mahmud's house tonight? And Daoud replied: He will climb up the sweet lime tree and enter her window, but before he can take off her petticoat trousers she will scream for the servants. They will come and give him a beating for they will think him a stranger, and this will be his lesson. And it will be one difficult to forget, for he is too much of a yokel to invent